

IT'S MORPHIN TIME!

"Go Go Power Rangers!" The '90s kids TV series has been upgraded as a big screen adventure. Scott Hocking met the fantastic five – Becky G., Dacre Montgomery, Naomi Scott, RJ Cyler and Ludi Lin.

Singer turned actor Becky G. calls *Power Rangers* "a cool coming of age story" – albeit one in which the fate of the world rests on the shoulders of five teenaged superheroes that discover strength in unity, and consequently their own identities.

It's this journey of self-discovery that defines all five characters – ordinary high school kids who must become something extraordinary in order to defeat an alien threat and the villainous Rita Repulsa (Elizabeth Banks).

"The themes that you see in this film are universal," offers Perth-born Dacre Montgomery, who plays jock Jason Scott, aka the Red Ranger. "The difference between this and the TV series from the '90s is that we're appealing to a contemporary audience. We live in the Avengers age, the DC and Marvel era, where films are crafted for a certain demographic. We're appealing to a demographic that spans from six year olds to fifty year olds."

Montgomery notes that his own high school experience was far removed from his character. "I wasn't that person. I was really overweight, I didn't play sport, I didn't have any friends and I was bullied. Jason is seeking a relationship with people in other social groups and that's pretty much what I did. It's about bringing my experience and melding it with what I built for myself – losing weight, training for the film, and finding a nice place between."

The five actors' offscreen friendship played a huge part in creating a convincing rapport between their onscreen characters. "The relationships you see in the film are no different. From the first day we all bonded and we are all

friends," explains Montgomery.

Keeping things real was the mission statement for director Dean Israelite, whose previous film, *Project Almanac*, featured a young ensemble cast and a credible teen dynamic.

"*Project Almanac* is a sci-fi film, but it's a found footage sci-fi film and he made it seem real," says Ludi Lin. "That's kind of the look he's going for with *Power Rangers*. He has a very specific vision in mind."

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"That was actually a big part of my trust in him," adds Naomi Scott.

"It was about these kids and their relationships and it had to feel real. They bounced off each other and he knows how to bring that out, and that's exactly what he did with us."

"It's important for it to be real," agrees Becky G. "These characters are dealing with issues that teenagers deal with. It's genuine.

It's an imaginary world but there's so much heart to it."

With its multicultural cast, *Power Rangers* celebrates diversity, but not as a means of satisfying political correctness. "When we got the breakdown for the characters for the audition, there was no ethnicity," says RJ Cyler.

"We all come from different cultures and backgrounds and that's the story of our characters as well," confirms Becky G.

Lin believes the film's message is about togetherness. "It's a positive message for all, because the world is not going to be saved by a single nation or a single person. The message is we need to come together to create something lasting and positive." ☺

MEET THE RANGERS

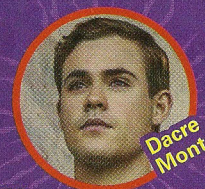
"We literally blew up the whole stereotype of what each Ranger colour should be." – RJ Cyler



Becky G.

TRINI THE YELLOW RANGER

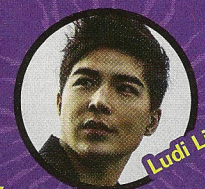
"Trini is a badass. She's a loner who's constantly moving around with her parents. When she meets these other incredible people, they bring out the best in her."



Dacre Montgomery

JASON THE RED RANGER

"Jason is the captain of the football team – the good looking guy who gets the girls." He's also in need of redemption.



Ludi Lin

ZACK THE BLACK RANGER

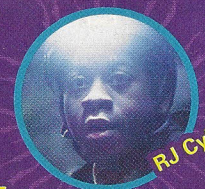
"Zack the Black is wild, but there's a depth and sensitivity that's hiding underneath. But he's unable to let that out because there's so many challenges that he's facing that he can't handle alone."



Naomi Scott

KIMBERLEY THE PINK RANGER

Former Queen Bee of Angel Grove High. "She's strong, she's sassy and she's funny. She's not just the popular girl. No 17-year-old is just one thing in this day and age."



RJ Cyler

BILLY THE BLUE RANGER

Socially awkward but whip-smart. "Billy is very evasive and doesn't like confrontation, and under that he wants to be around other people. Billy's very weird, and I like my weird Billy."

• *Power Rangers* is in cinemas on March 23